

SOME
OBSERVATIONS

Upon the

L A W S

AGAINST

Protestant Dissenters;

Proving that the

Manner of Executing those Laws, is
Provoking to GOD, Injurious to
the DISSENTERS,

A N D

Scandalous to the CHURCH.



L O N D O N :

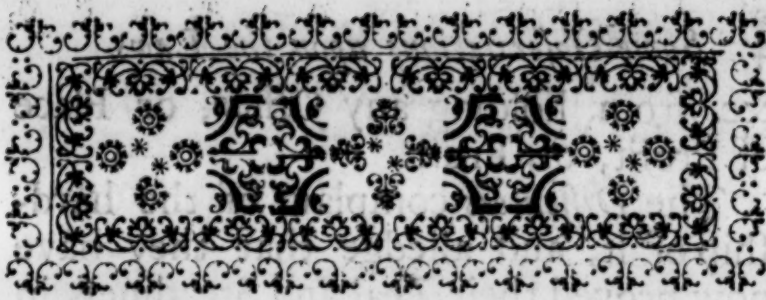
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OBSEKVACTIONS

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SOME
OBSERVATIONS

Upon the

L A W S

AGAINST

Protestant Dissenters.



ANY Disputes, and much Contention have happen'd in a few Years past, about the keeping on, or taking off the Law called the Sacramental-Test-Act, or an Act disabling all those who do not communicate in the Church of *England*,

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&c. from holding any Office, or Place
of Profit, or Trust.

The *Dissenters* complain of the hardship of it, and alledge that they have now proved their Zeal and Steadiness in the King's Interest beyond all possibility of Dispute; that they have been remarkably serviceable, as well before his Majesty's Accession, as since, by their opposing *Popery*, and the *Pretender*, and have on all Occasions been ready to lay down their Lives for the Government, and for the Person of King *GEORGE*; they say it is hard, they should be still treated as Enemies, as Persons dangerous to the Monarchy in General, and to the Church in particular; and upon this Foot they think they ought to be admitted to the Profits, the Trusts, and Honour of being employ'd in common with the rest of his Majesty's Subjects.

The other side alledge, that they who cannot joyn in the Communion of the Church cannot be esteem'd Friends of the Church; that the *Dissenters* have, on many Accounts, shewn their Contempt of the Church, and their willingness to pull her down; and therefore

against Protestant Dissenters. §

fore they must watch against those Evils that threaten the whole Fabrick, and commit no Trust, where we are not assur'd very well of the Persons being in one and the same Interests. That the Church of *England* has many pretended Friends that are her utter Enemies, and she ought to fence effectually against them; that they that will not communicate with her, should not be concern'd in the Government of her, they that would not sit down with her at the Table of the Lord, should not sit in her Councils, &c.

Now the best way to State this Case, so as may be effectual at such a time as this, when Men's Minds are fluctuating between the Extremes on both Sides; is in my Opinion to examine, whether these Restraints and Limitations laid upon the Hands of the *Dissenters*, are agreeable to the Rules of the Christian Religion, to the Doctrines of the Gospel, and to the Institution of our Saviour; for as to the Article of the Civil Power, there remains very little room to Dispute, seeing the Law has been made by the Supreme Authority

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thority of the Nation (*viz.*) by the Parliament, the Representative of the whole Kingdom.

But if we prove it to be contrary to the Laws of God; if, we prove it to be inconsistent with Religion, and repugnant to the Doctrine of our own Church; if we prove, that these Laws obliges us to practise Things destructive of the Government of the Church, and ruining to all Discipline; leaving the Pale of God's Ordinances, laid open; and exposing the Holy Institutions of our blessed Saviour to be trampled underfoot by his Enemies, casting his Pearl to the Swine; if all this can be made clear, it will then be acknowledg'd, that it is worth the Consideration of a Christian Legislature, and high-time for all that are concern'd to avert the Wrath of Almighty God, and his Judgments from falling upon the Nation, to recommend these Things to Consideration. For certainly, no Assembly of Christians, and *Protestants* can decline enquiring into such Laws; no *Protestant* Assembly can think themselves unconcern'd, or be easy in suffering Laws to remain

remain in force under them, which are contrary to the Laws of God, and destructive to Religion in general.

Nor can any one pretend, at least I hope none will be so malicious, that it is an Offence to say, that any of our Laws may be unrighteous, or are so, for the Case manifestly differs here in this essential Degree (*viz.*) that this Law was not unrighteous in its Design, but proves so in its Effect; which Effect is an Accident to the Design, and indeed is a Corruption of it; seeing it was a Law design'd to distinguish only between two differing Religions (*viz.*) *Popish* and *Protestant*, and not to ruin Orthodox Christians, and punish innocent Men; as it was a Mark of Distinction between the Nations sworn Enemies, and her faithful Members, it was most just; but as it is now perverted in its use, and the Edge of it turn'd against *Protestants*, for only religious, conscientious Scruples, it becomes a Grievance, and claims our serious Application; and for this I must say, 'tis remarkable that I have extraordinary Precedents to bring, whose Opinion will confirm

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confirm what is offered in these Sheets, and I cannot but insist upon it, as an Addition to my Argument.

It has now been Twice recommended from the Throne, and by the two wisest and best Kings, that ever fill'd the Seat of Government in this Nation, (*viz.*) King *WILLIAM*, and King *GEORGE*; that it was for the Interest of *Great-Britain*, and agreeable both to the Judgment and Desire of their Majesty's. That some Measures should be thought of to strengthen the *Protestant* Interest, by uniting *Protestants*, in, at least, their Civil Interest; where they cannot be united in their religious Interest.

This is understood to contain more by some People, than they think it reasonable to Grant, and perhaps by others less than they wish for. It seems necessary to set it in a true Light; that we may, if possible, remove the Scruples of those, who think more is demanded of them, than they ought to Grant; and that the Proposal it self is dangerous to the Church, both which I think are easily confuted.

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The first Objection we meet with in this particular Case, is made by those who are not indeed so Ignorant, as they are Designing and Trayterous, and who aim not so much at wounding the *Dissenters*, as they do at insulting the Government, and the Person of the King himself: Those would first intimate, that what the *Dissenters* desire is injurious to the Church, and that the King proposing it, springs from a Deficiency of Care of the Church, or real Kindness to the Church.

To strengthen their Reproaches of this kind, they tell us, that none of our Kings or Queens ever favour'd the *Dissenters*; but the Two Kings, which they, by way of Reproach, call Foreigners: Intimating, that Foreign Princes, when they come to mount the *British* Throne, cannot have the same Affection to the Church, as those who were born here; in which we must take leave to differ from them, and shall give our Reasons for it in the Course of these Sheets.

These People would take it ill, if we should tell them, that in this they

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Reproach even the Church of *England* it self; as if her Doctrine and Communion was different from, and not to be approved by any of the *Protestant* Churches in the World; and that she was afraid of admitting any *Protestant* of any of the Churches in *Europe*, to Terms of Charity and Christian Liberty, but such only, as could joyn in her Communion: This I call a Reproach; and it is so without question, because it insinuates, that could any of the *Protestant* Churches of *Europe*, or of their Members be allow'd here, they would be dangerous to our Church.

What is this but openly telling us, that they are afraid to trust the Principles and Communion of the Church of *England* upon the Foundation of its own Merit, and to stand upon the Basis of other Churches (*viz.*) the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner Stone. But were obliged to fortifie her Constitution, by Civil Sanctions, exclusive Laws, Penalties, &c. and while they decline trusting any *Protestants* with any share in the Civil Administration, who have not declar'd Assent,

Assent, and Consent, and have not entirely given in to all the *Postulata* of the *English* Ecclesiastic Constitution, they, in a manner, excommunicate all Churches in the World.

This if I am not mistaken, is not the Practise of any *Protestant* Church in the World, but the Church of *England*; and either implies, that the Church-men are even criminally greedy of Temporal Employments, and have made this Sacramental Test no more or less, than a meer Tool to engross to themselves the Profits of the Nation, on pretence of religious Qualifications, a thing which must be call'd a down right profaning the sacred Institution of Jesus Christ. Or that they act by a Principle of Religion, differing from those the Church of *England* her self professes: And this brings me down to the particular Method of handling this Argument, which, as I said above, I design'd, and which my Title directs to (*viz.*) That the Laws which we now complain of, or at least the Practise of some Church-men in their Construction of, and the Manner of their executing those

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Laws,

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Laws, is contrary to, and inconsistent with, not only true Religion, and the Principles of the Christian Profession, but even contrary to the Doctrine of the Church of *England* it self, which those People, who, all the while they act thus, pretend to profess.

The stated Declaration made in Parliament, on Account of the first Occasional Bill, will for ever remain a Rule, in this Case, to refer to (*viz.*) *that Persecution for Conscience, is contrary to the Principles of the Christian Religion, and the Doctrine of the Church of England.*

Doubtless these disenabling Severities, are within the Compass of what we call Persecution, even by all the Notions of Persecution that ever were receiv'd in the World: If being turn'd out of Employments, which are possess'd, and perhaps had been so for some Years; and on which perhaps the Support of a Family depends be a Suffering, and this Suffering be occasion'd by the Person's strictly adhering to his Principles, and the Dictates of his own Conscience, and on no other Ground whatsoever; then is the Force, which
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is the Cause of this Suffering, justly esteem'd to be Persecution, and that of the extremest kind as shall be further explained by the next Head.

If this Suffering reduces the Sufferer to Distress, to the inexpressible Hardships of Want, and, which is yet harder, to the more inexpressible, and more unsufferable Hardship, of seeing a Family, a Wife that is as his own Soul, and Children that are dearer than the Breath we draw, reduc'd to starving and want; is not this a Persecution, even beyond the Cruelties of Death? Is it not a Suffering, even beyond that of Fire and Fagot? Are there not Thousands of honest and innocent Persons, who could much rather Sacrifice themselves, and even suffer Death, than thus be stript of those Employments, upon which the Bread of their Families have depended, and yet who by a Principle of Conscience, not daring to act against the Dictates of that Light, which they believe to be Heavenly, and of the Truth, of which Principles they are thorowly perswaded, have been oblig'd to quit their
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Employments, and to see themselves and Families perish with Misery and Want?

We are not without innumerable Examples of such as these, who none can deny, are properly Sufferers for Conscience, and that to such an Extremity, as few can imitate, which Sufferings can have no other Title given them, than that of a violent and severe Persecution.

From these we come to those Persons, who, being destitute of Employments, qualified for the Service of their Country, and capable by their Interest to obtain such Publick Business, as might support and maintain their Families, are rejected and refused, merely because they cannot prostitute their Consciences, to Things which are against their Profession and Principles. To enter into the Enquiry here, why these Things are against their Conscience, and why they cannot comply, is in it self as needless as insufficient, for to him to whom it is so opposite to Principle, to him it is Sin to comply; nay, tho' his Principle be founded upon Ignorance

Ignorance or Mistake, and the Question does not turn upon the Reason of his being perswaded in his Mind, whether for want of right Information, or otherwise; but upon his being really perswaded at all, seeing as it is impossible to give Light in, and right Knowledge of Divine Things, but from Heaven. So it is unchristian to force the Light and Knowledge, that any Man adheres to, and has receiv'd, and effectually to do it on pretence of the want of Degrees, which they that Object the want of cannot give.

If this be true, as seems undeniable; then it must follow, that all the Force, whether by Humane Laws, or otherwise; which is offer'd to the Consciences of the People of *England*, of the Kind we are now speaking of, is Unchristian, contrary to the Principles of true Religion, and is a meer Persecution for Conscience, which the Church of *England* her self declares against, as above.

Nor, on the other Hand, will all the Objections against the Persons affect this Argument; as to all the Notions of their being Dangerous to the Church, of
their

their being Enemies to the Government, and to Monarchy; and all the other Political Pretences, which have for many Years been made use of to support the persecuting Practise of former Reigns, they can take no Place here. For, if there are Civil Reasons for disabling any Persons from enjoying Advantages in the Government, Civil Tests may be made to disable such; Ways may certainly be found out to secure the Government, without entailing the Indignation of Heaven upon the Kingdom, by establishing Unrighteousness by a Law, and erecting an Authority over Conscience, which Christ Jesus never gave it into the Power of Man to erect. It is sad Circumstances for any Civil Government to be in (*viz.*) to be under the Necessity of provoking Heaven, to preserve the Constitution; to set up wicked and unjustifiable Methods to support themselves, and to build their Establishment upon Oppression and Persecution. This is to arm the Power of Heaven against them, and fly to the Power of Man to protect them; and the Cries of the Persecuted

secuted Families to him who is able to avenge them, shall always do more towards the Ruine of such a Church, or such a Government, than ever their very Enemies can pretend to fear from them, by their being taken into Places or Employments in Question.

What unaccountable Absurdities are there lodg'd in the Argument, as it stands thus, upon the Foundation of the Practise, being Lawful or not Lawful. Here is Heaven affronted, to preserve the Government, Religion contradicted, to secure the Church, and Principle trampled upon, to establish Power; Is this the way to engage the Favour of Heaven to the People that practise it? Can the Church of *England* look for Security in Practise, contrary to her own Doctrine? Can the Clergy look up to Heaven for a Blessing; upon a Practise inconsistent with the Christian Religion? Is this the Way to engage Heaven in the Church's Quarrel? Or is it the Way to provoke Heaven against them? It were well, if the Gentlemen who argue for these Violences, would consider these Things; and would let the

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World know by some such Method, as becomes Christians to do, that they have considered them, and that they do act from Principles well consider'd, in what they do of this Kind, or what they intend to do with their Brethren.

They will not pretend to say, they are unconcern'd, whether the Case is just or no; whether it is within the Rules of Christianity; or, in a Word, whether Heaven is for or against them. Not the worst of Men will venture to argue on such Principles as those; let us then State the Question fairly, in Point of Conscience and Duty, either to God or Man.

Either these persecuting Laws are just, or they are not; if they are not, it is not all the Pretences of Safety to the Church, or Security to the Government, that will justify their being made Laws, or executed as Laws. For all Laws, repugnant to Justice and the Laws of God, are void in their own Nature, and are, not only a Violation of Christian Duties, but are a high Contempt of the Authority of Jesus Christ in the Government of his Church, and

and of the Creator of all Things in the Government of the World; and of such Laws it may be said, they Sin against God, who put them in Execution, and they Sin against God, who obey them.

If these Laws are said to be just, and agreeable to the Laws of God; let those that say so bring them to the Touchstone, as well of Reason, as of the Word of God, which is the Rule to judge by.

Can it be reasonable to believe, that it is lawful to apply the sacred Institutions of Jesus Christ, such as the Sacraments of his own appointing, to Ends and Uses, different from, and repugnant to, those Ends and Uses, for which our Lord himself appointed them. *For Example*; The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was an Ordinance instituted, with two remarkable Uses or Ends; both being mentioned in the Institution.

First, That it be done, as a Commemoration of our blessed Redeemer, they are his own exprefs Words. *This do in remembrance of me.*

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Secondly, That it was to Illustrate and Explain the Sufferings of Christ, and declare them to the World, and to the End of the World, this is express'd in those Words, *To shew forth the Lord's Death, till he come.*

In the whole Scripture, there is not one Example, and thro' the whole Tenour of the Word of God, there is no Symptom or Appearance, that there was any Civil Politic Use allow'd, or intended to be allow'd, to be made of this Ordinance; much less, that it should be allow'd to be made a Test of Qualification for Civil Advancements or Trusts; that none should be admitted into Councils, Armys, Navys, or any Trust in the Civil Government, but such as had been thus admitted to the Lord's Table.

With what Face can any Man say, that this sacred Ordinance may be prostituted to secular Ends and Designs; or indeed to any other Ends and Uses, than such as are appointed in the Institution, or at least such as are appointed by him that instituted it.

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From hence, let us go on to the Practise of the Church of Christ in all Ages, and why have not those who plead for this Practise hitherto, brought some Example in the early Ages of the Church, when the communicating with this or that Church, was made a Test of Qualification for Civil Employment; especially, where the Persons were known to receive the Orthodox Faith, and to join in all the essential Articles of Religion.

Sure the People, who first turn'd the Edge of this great Law of Church-Communion against the *Dissenters*, which, *by the Way*, was only design'd by the Legislature to be turn'd against *Papists* and Idolaters, had either no Concern upon them for the Equity and Justice of their Actions, and whether they were to be defended upon Christian Principles or not, or had never given themselves Time to enquire into the Practise of the Primitive Churches? Certainly, if such a Thing had ever been done, there might be some shadow of it remaining; something to shew, that in General it was approv'd
of,

of, or that in some or other of the long Reign of the Christian Emperors, it had been done, or something like it.

There was indeed rash Excommunications, and uncharitable Separations one from another upon many trifling Occasions; even in the Primitive Times; as particularly, about the Time of the Celebration of *Easter*. But even these were condemned by the just Suffrage of the more moderate Part of the Church; but that taking the Sacrament was ever made a Test for the Admittance of military Officers, Governours and Courtiers, we may challenge all the Masters of History in the World, to shew us one Example of it among all the Christians, either of the *Eastern* or *Western* Churches. Nay, if I had said among all the Christians, and Christian Governments from our Saviour's Time, till the Establishment of this Law, we now complain of.

For God's sake then, whence have we the Right to establish Laws, which Christ Jesus never instituted? And which Primitive Ages never practised? Laws, which have neither Precept or Example

Example to direct them, neither in the Word of God, or out of it; Where has this Authority been hid for Seventeen Hundred Years? And who made the Discovery of it at last? That we should now plead for a Practise which no Scripture justifies, no Church, no Nation ever pretended to before us.

If it be suggested, that the voluntary Consent of the Nation, which is understood in 'all the Acts pass'd by a legal Representative of the whole Body, legitimates this Act; we may answer, it may be true in all Laws, that are Consonant to the Laws of Reason and Religion; but I must be allowed to say, that in Case of an Act repugnant to these, the National Consent may indeed entitle us to National Judgments, for enacting and executing such Laws, but can by no means legitimate such Practises, or give any Sanction to a Law, which is not justified by the Laws of God.

Besides, it has often been said, that the Execution of this Law has been turn'd, and the Point of it applied to an End remote, and quite different from,

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from that, which the Legislators, who first made it, design'd it for; and consequently, the Law, as now executed, may not properly be said to be the Act and Deed of the whole Nation, nor are the whole Body in that Sence any way accountable for it.

But we have another Objection against this Law, and which Charges it with overthrowing the very Being of all Church Government in the World; an Objection which calls aloud, not for an Answer, for it can never be answer'd; but for redress; an Objection which indeed charges it with a Crime, and such a Crime, as I believe no *Protestant* Church or Nation, but ours are guilty of, and this is that, not only conscientious Christians are persecuted, for not complying against their Principles with this Clause, in a manner, which, without Sin, they cannot comply with it. But scandalous Persons, such as by the Nature of the Ordinance, and by the exprefs Words of the Institution, are warned not to come, and ought not to be admitted, are not only admitted without due Examination;

on; but even by the Compulsion of the Church, oblig'd to come to the Lord's Table, to the most horrible Prophanation of the Ordinance it self, destroying the End of it's Institution, and overthrowing all Church Discipline in the World.

Such Evidence does this Argument carry in it self, that even the Profess'd Enemies of the Dissenters, declare themselves on all Occasions against Persecution with the utmost Vehemence: To confirm this, I shall produce an Author eminent for the utmost Aversion to the Dissenters, and who perhaps has nothing in him to recommend him to the Friends of the High Principles, but that Aversion; yet from whom the Nature of the Thing extorted this following Truth, upon the General Head of Coertion, and which exactly reaches our Case.

"If a Man, says he, differs from an Establish'd Church, not in Fundamentals, but only in Things which were
D " never

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" *Establish'd Church*, not in *Fundamen-*
" *tals*, but only in *Things* which were

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" never

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“ never esteem’d *Terms* of *Communion*
 “ with it; and it may be, moved there-
 “ to by the Religion of an *Oath*: Will
 “ it not be hard, that he should be pu-
 “ nished as an open Oppugnor of, and
 “ an incorrigible Enemy to it? There
 “ is a vast Disproportion between those
 “ who differ from others in Matters of
 “ Religion, or Government, and, at the
 “ same Time, study to live quietly, and
 “ to do their own *Business*; with them
 “ who violently oppose Both, and are of
 “ such *Turbulent* and *Fiery* Tempers, that
 “ they can never rest till they have kin-
 “ dled the Coals of Sedition, and put all
 “ into a Flame: And tho’ *Alcalies* may
 “ be proper for the *Former*, we do not
 “ pretend to say that nothing but the
 “ strongest *Acids* will reform the *Latter*.

To “ The Tempers of Men are as diffe-
 “ rent as those of Children; some of
 “ which will be corrected by *Emollients*,
 “ when the severest *Astringents* can
 “ hardly amend the other. This, *The-*
 “ mistocles, the great *Athenian* General,
 “ was very sensible of; when going on
 “ an

“ an Embassy to the *Andrians*, he told
“ them, that he came accompanied by
“ two very powerful Deities, *Persuasion*
“ and *Violence*: The *One* of which was
“ to lead the *Gentle*, the *Other* to com-
“ pel the *Obstinate* to *Obedience*.

I suppose none will contend that taking Mens Employments from them, or keeping them from being employ'd in Case of Non-conformity, is not the strongest Force upon them to comply, that can be used, Death excepted? It is indeed scarce worth while to start such a Cavil as that for them, which if they would not blush to offer, they would be made ashamed in defending.

But I leave this Part, and proceed to another as Scandalous, and as Criminal as this; and that is the perverting all Church Discipline, by building on the Basis of Civil Authority, a necessity of sinning in the grossest and most provoking Manner; this is explain'd by the Practise of Dragging, as

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I may call it, all sorts of Wretches to the Lord's Table, whom even by the Nature of the Ordinance, and by the express Gospel Rules of the Administration, ought to be first of all exhorted not to approach, and rejected if they attempted it.

We have many Cautions in Scripture against coming rashly, and against admitting rashly to the Sacrament; but not one Word of forcing unworthy prophane Despisers of God and Religion, to communicate against their Wills and Inclinations, and even depriving them of their Bread, if they decline it.

This is a Practise, every good Christian must reflect on with some Horror, and it will be hard to find any Man, that has ever been so hardy, as to defend it; the greatest Champions of the High Church Party, and those who have said most on the Subject, have, however laid their Fingers upon this Part, and passing it over in Silence,

lence, have thereby tacitly confess'd, that they could not speak one Word in Justification of the Practise, or so much as suggest, that it was not the most abominable unheard of thing of its kind, that ever was permitted in a Christian Church.

Let me bring in here the happy Expressions on these very Thoughts, just now published by the Bishop of Bangor, in his Answer to the Convocation, as follows.

“ I will add as I pass one *Question* ;
 “ Whether the Reverend Dr. *Sherlock*;
 “ or I, give the more sincere Proofs of
 “ our Concern for *this* Right : I, who
 “ have pleaded for the repealing an *Act*
 “ of *Parliament*, which forces *Clergymen*
 “ to give the *Communion* to every *Atheist*,
 “ or *Debauchee*, who may be named to
 “ any Civil Office ; unless he chuses to
 “ be ruined for not doing it ; or *He* who
 “ would appear to contend earnestly a-
 “ gainst *Me*, for the continuance of that
 “ Burthen, under which all good Men,
 “ as

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“as I have understood, have long
“groan’d; so far Bishop of *Bangor*.

This is a glorious Testimony of a truly Christian Bishop, against a horrid Abuse of the Quintessence of Government, and Discipline in the Church; and after this, nothing can be said too much to express a Practice so very justly abhorred by good Men.

Nay, it effectually confirms what is said above, of the Nature of these Laws being Unchristian, and destructive of all true Religion, inconsistent with Christian Principles, and repugnant to the Doctrine of the Church of *England*; for what Christian Mind can think without some Horror, of thus forcing Men, unthinking and unprepar’d, I mean who are so to come and receive, while on the contrary, the Scripture declares that unworthy receiving to be of the utmost Concern, commanding every true Christian to examine himself, and so to eat or to refrain.

But

But there is yet a Snare in these Laws, which the Legislature perhaps is not aware of, and which lies upon the Clergy of the Church of *England*; as a Thing of the utmost Consequence to them, and indeed, very injurious, in Case they the said Clergy act the conscientious Part; and it is wonderful to observe, that this Part has never yet been taken notice of in Public, tho' I know it is the Grief of many of the most sober Conscientious and Religious Part of the Church of *England*; the Case is this.

An Officer of any Kind, suppose of the Army, or of the Fleet; take it of those that are the worst, living in a Country Town, and having newly taken a Commission, applies himself to the Minister of the Parish to give him the Communion, in order to qualify himself for his Commission, as the Law directs. It happens, that the Minister being a pious good Christian, Answers him thus, Sir, I am a Mini-

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Minister of this Parish, and the Souls therein are committed to my Charge, I am very willing to do all the Duties of my Function, and to administer the Holy Sacrament to you. But I desire your Pardon, for using so much Freedom, as to admonish you, that your Life being known in this Parish, to have been very openly Vitious, and indeed scandalous, I dare not administer the Holy Sacrament, without exhorting you to repent, and amend your Life. The Officer too much like the Gentlemen of that Profession, returns Da——me Sir, don't tell me of my Life, and of repenting, and I know not what, I must take the Sacrament, or lose my Commission; I desire you'll do as the Law directs, and leave the rest to me. Why Sir, says the Minister, I cannot satisfy my Conscience, in administering the Holy Sacrament to you; who, I am fully convinc'd, are not in a Condition by any Means for the receiving it, for you not only live in a known and notorious Life of Wickedness; but you declare, you do
not

not desire to amend or repent ; for Example Sir, you live in open and notorious Adultery, openly cohabiting with a Woman who has Elop'd from her Husband ; and you have a lawful Wife, who you have separated from without lawful Pretence ; and how can I administer the Sacrament to you, unless you declare your Resolution to reform this scandalous Part of your Life ?

The Officer touch'd to the quick with the refusal, tho' done with all the Moderation and Justice, Calmness and Christian tenderness in the World, falls a Raging, Damning and Swearing at the Minister like a Mad Man ; and when he has done, says, do you know the Law, Sir, (*viz.*) that if you refuse me, I may sue you, and you forfeit 500 l. look to it at your Peril, for I will stick close to you. Here suppose him to subjoin innumerable Oaths and Curses, and Imprecations. However, the good Man persists and refuses, not daring to act against his Conscience, and accordingly the mad Man sues, and in the End ruins the Minister.

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If

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If this be Matter of Fact, let any one judge whether it is not time, that this Law should be repeal'd.

Since these Things have been under Consideration, the Town has been amuss'd with a great Variety of Rumours concerning this bold Attempt, as it is call'd, of the Dissenters. and as every one takes the Liberty to Harangue upon the Subject, according to his own Notion of the Thing, and this with an uncommon Variety, it has fill'd the Heads of the People with very odd and different Notions about what it is that we call giving the Dissenters Liberty, and setting them free from the Fetters of the Law.

These several Disputes have brought the Question in general into a narrower Compass than it was in before, and we may resolve the Substance of it into two short Heads, 1. What it is the Dissenters demand? 2dly. What it is the Church would grant? I begin with the last of these first, because there has been a kind of a *Christs-mass* Report spread about, during the late Recess of Parliament, viz. That there had been a Meeting

Meeting of some of the Clergy in a body, to consider of some Methods to secure the Church, in the Terms of the King's Speech; or in short to consider how far the Dissenters might be gratified, and yet the Church of *England* be preserv'd safe.

It is said (for I resolve to treat this Report as a Chimera only, be it true or false) that in this Meeting three things were propos'd, viz. 1. A Comprehension: This is an old Project and contains a giving up such religious Points, as being before held indifferent, it seem'd unjust to be so tenacious of, as to thrust out Christians for their not conforming to; which yielding being a Testimony of exceeding Charity, shou'd, if met half way by suitable Advances on the other Side, bring the discording Parties to one Point, in which they might all agree: But this being, I say, a stale Project, and upon many Occasions found impracticable, went little farther than to be nam'd, and so died in its Infancy. 2. The next Business was, it seems, to see what they could take off, and what they could not; or, in a Word,

how far a Dissenter might be gratified, and how far not.

In this we hear, they concluded, that some Exceptions should be made in the Acts relating to the Dissenters, but that they should not be entirely repeal'd. For Example, They would have it declar'd that the Dissenters should be qualified to serve in all City and Corporation Offices, to be Common-Councilmen, Aldermen, Recorders, &c. and Justices of the Peace without taking the Test; that is to say, these Gentlemen would grant all those Offices to the Dissenters, which are indeed Matters of meer Service, Matters of Difficulty, Hazard or Charge; but as to Offices to which Salaries are annex'd, that is to say, Offices of Profit and Trust, those they would restrain them from and engross to themselves.

Now, not to conclude whether the Dissenters can acquiesce in this Proposal or not, let us a little speak our Thoughts about the Morality of it: Either the Dissenters have been excluded from Offices, Places, Trust, &c. on Account of their being Enemies to the Church

Church, and dangerous to the Government, or they have not; if they have not, it wou'd be hard to say why they have then been so long excluded at all; and if they have, how, with any Appearance of Honesty, can those Men consent to admit them again to Offices of Trouble and Expences, but expel them from Offices of Trust and Profit. This takes off the whole weight of the Charge from that Part which has so long been the Pretence, *viz.* The publick Safety, and Throws it all upon a frailer Part, of which nothing needs to be said here more than this, that I hope no such Proposal has indeed been made, or that the Persons who are nam'd to it, *viz.* The Arch-bishop and Bishops, and other of the reverend Clergy of the Church of *England*, were not really concern'd in offering things lyable to such just Exceptions, and which would lay such Reproaches upon the Reputation of those who are concern'd in them.

Certain it is, that whoever offers to the Dissenters the Repeal of Part of the Laws which they now complain of, but wou'd keep them under the Burthen
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of others, if any such Offers are made, must expose themselves to some Scandal, unless they will first prove a Difference in the Justice of the Imposition of one from that of the other, which I believe will be impossible for them to do; and if they cannot do this, the Objection against the Injustice of those which remain, will be just the same as it was before, and all the Arguments which have been used against the whole will be good still against those which are not remov'd.

Especially this is to be observ'd in the Proposals above, if any such were made, *viz.* That this Admission of the Dissenters to Corporation Trusts, as they are call'd, does not at all reach the great controverted Point, of procuring, to King *GEORGE* and his Interest, the Assistance of the Hands, as He has already of the Hearts of so great a body of his People, and procuring that those Lives which are so ready, if Occasion serves, to be spent entirely in his Service, shou'd not be unprofitably languish'd away under party and political Restraints, while the Hands and Heads
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of those that restrain them, are visibly employ'd in laying Foundations for farther Rebellion, and to distress the Publick, which by these Laws they render weak and disabled for its own Defence and Security.

Such a partial Proposal as this, smells rank of Jacobitism; and while it seems to yield to the Justice of the Kings Demand, yet cunningly keeps back all, but that which signifies nothing to the Cause in Hand.

We see daily the Advances which secret Breaches among Courtiers, with the artful Insinuations of Jacobites and disaffected Persons, make in their Opposition to the King and his Government; and without doubt if they can carry this Point, they would think their Design very well fortified; for they desire nothing more than to keep the Dissenters in their present disabled Condition, without which they would have nothing to do but to despair, and give over their hopes.

For this Reason, if there were no other, the Dissenters cannot acquiesce in a part of their Request; nothing can
satisfy

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satisfy them till they have a fair Field to act in against the Enemies of King *GEORGE*, and room to shew their Zeal for the Establishment of the *Har- over* Succession: Let this Door be open'd, and they will abate any thing else; as it is evident if this Door be shut, the High Party would grant them any thing else.

Thus stands their Case as to the new Projects of Accommodation, as far at least as we hear of them by Report; when we see any thing stated in Publick, as a Medium to be offer'd in this Case, we shall speak farther to it.



F I N I S.

